LABOUR MONTHLY

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RACIALISM AND REACTION

The Editor

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ENGINEERS' LESSON IN LOYALTY

J. R. Foster

★

THE TUC's CENTURY

Allen Hutt

★

Impressions of Biafra: Margot Parish

James Connolly Centenary: Joseph Deighan

World Struggle at New Delhi: Quaestor

JUNE 1968

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Notes of the Month

RACIALISM AND REACTION

> **'Every industrial and commercial centre in England now possesses a working class *divided* into two *hostile* camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of living . . . 'This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This *antagonism* is the *secret of the impotence of the English working class*, despite its organisation. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power.'**
>
> MARX, letter to S. Meyer and A. Vogt, April 9, 1870.

May 20, 1968

The present crisis in Labour Party policy, with the rout at the local elections and the battle over the Incomes Bill; the militant response of three million engineers for the token stoppage on May 15; and the carefully timed explosion of racialism as the grand issue put over from above to confuse and disrupt the popular forces —these are not unconnected phenomena. All are expressions of the present unstable economic-political situation in Britain.

Roots of Racialism

Racialism is the symptom of a sick society. 'Illness', Samuel Johnson said, 'makes a man a scoundrel'. Tsarism, tottering on the verge of revolution, fostered the Black Hundreds and its anti-semitic pogroms, until the victory of the Bolshevik revolution ended the pogroms. In the regions controlled by the White Guards Governments, financed and armed by the West, the pogroms continued, until the victory of the Red Armies finally wiped them out for ever. Hindus and Moslems lived peaceably together in India for centuries until in the era of the advance of the national movement imperialism devised elaborate means for fostering their antagonism to blaze out finally in mutual massacre and partition of the country. Arabs and Jews lived peaceably together in Palestine for centuries until imperialism intervened to create the present cauldron of hell for the whole Arab East. Connolly, the centenary of whose birth we salute this month, and Larkin led the Irish workers in unity from

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North to South; imperialism, which had already inserted the Plantation, imposed partition. Hitler and Nazism, backed by the millionaires and the General Staff, soared in the era of inflation after the first war, sank again in the era of partial stabilisation, advanced anew in the midst of the world economic crisis, and were hastily placed in power from above after the electoral defeat of November 1932, when the loss of two million Nazi votes and the advance of the socialist-communist vote to exceed the Nazi vote warned the ruling class of the urgency of speedy action. So now in Britain, when the worsening situation of capitalism in crisis is leading to the most ferocious offensive against the standards of the people, when Labour right-wing leadership is discredited, and the organised working class in industry is showing militant resistance, the Powell match is dropped among the tinder, with the formal disavowal and practical aid of Heath, Wilson and the megaphone press, to put across *racialism as the great issue before the British people.*

Two-Handed Engine

It is important to recognise the dual mechanism by which the ruling class or imperialist ruling power puts over racialism while appearing to deprecate it. On the one hand, limelight with every device of publicity is provided for the top-level 'daring' 'outspoken' 'extremist', who openly voices racialist doctrines or kindles the flames of racialism. On the other hand, all the 'respectable' top figures of the social and political world, who make a great show of disavowing this spokesman with shocked disapproval, in practice protect and facilitate his path, and in their actual measures pursue a parallel policy. The British Raj deplored and wrung its hands over the growth of Hindu-Moslem antagonism. At the same time in practice it fostered the division by the introduction of communal electorates, and behind the scenes had directly inspired the formation of the Moslem League. The Balfour Declaration pledged Britain to protect the rights of the Arabs living in Palestine. Practice exiled them from their country. Most significant for the present situation in Britain is the method of the organisation of the advance of Hitler and Nazism in Germany between the wars, and of Neo-Nazism in West Germany today.

From Hindenburg-Hitler to Kiesinger-Von Thadden

The significance of the German warning signal is not that the conditions in Britain are similar, but that the method of the pro-

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motion of the advance, equally of Nazism in Germany after the 1918 revolution to the accession of Hitler to power, or of Neo-Nazism in West Germany today, demonstrates this duplex mechanism with classic clarity. Hindenburg was elected President by the German people in 1932 as the candidate against Hitler. Hindenburg was presented to the electorate by the parties supporting him, by the Social Democrats, the Centre and other parties, as the candidate to represent the opposition to Hitler. The German electorate accordingly chose Hindenburg and rejected Hitler. Hindenburg got 19 million votes. Hitler got 13 million votes. Hindenburg then placed Hitler in power. Today the 'great election victory' of the Neo-Nazis or NPD in Baden-Württemburg has swept the front page banner headlines of the world's press. Of course, if it had been the British electoral system, they would only have got two lines at the bottom of a column to mention that they 'lost their deposit', since their 9.8 per cent vote fell below the 12½ per cent required by the British system to save a deposit, let alone win any seat, which requires an absolute top vote. So Kiesinger has begun to talk of changing over to the British electoral system designed to exclude representation of minorities. Under the existing system it is estimated that the NPD would get 50 seats in the next West German Parliament; under the British system, none. But Kiesinger has hastened to make clear that he is not thinking of changing to the British system until after the next election. In other words, first let the Neo-Nazis get firmly established in the West German Parliament with 50 seats; then bring in the British system to exclude the developing left wing political formation which is manifestly gathering despite the ban on the Communist Party. Ex-Nazi Kiesinger plays bat and ball with ex-Nazi Von Thadden.

Powell-Heath-Wilson Syndrome

In the eruption of racialist poison in this country all the attention has been focused on Enoch Powell and his notorious Birmingham speech of April 20 ('in this country in 15 or 20 years the black man will have the whip hand over the white man', 'we must be mad, literally mad . . . a nation building up its own funeral pyre', 'river foaming with blood', etc.). Heath rebukes Powell for his 'racialist' speech and dismisses him from his Shadow Cabinet. Wilson answers Powell with his Birmingham speech on May 5. Powell gloats over a bulging postbag in his support. Some misled workers demonstrate in support of the diehard anti-union Tory. Gallup reports 74 per

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cent supporting Powell ('agree with what Mr. Powell said in his speech on coloured immigrants'), and shows Powell leaping up from bottom preference for successor to Heath with 1 per cent in April to top with 24 per cent in May. A sufficiently dangerous picture of an explosive situation.

Whose Guilt?

But what of the role of Heath and the Tory Front Bench and Wilson and the Labour Front Bench? It was they who by their action and legislation over the preceding years prepared the climate for a Powell to exploit. It was the Tory Cabinet which in 1962 put through the first colour bar legislation with the Commonwealth Immigrants Act ('Commonwealth' being used, as everyone recognised at the time, and as practice has since abundantly proved, as the polite synonym for 'coloured'). Labour at the time under Gaitskell denounced the Act. But it was Wilson and the Labour Cabinet who in 1965 not only carried forward the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, but issued the new White Paper to intensify the colour bar restrictions. And it was the Labour Government and the Tory Front Bench combined who put through this year the new Commonwealth Immigrants Act which for the first time placed on the statute book the notorious Nazi racial formula of measuring qualifications in terms of grandparents, and thus, in the words of Lord Brockway's article in the April issue of this journal, made 'Racialism Now a Part of British Law'. Thus the guilt is a combined guilt of Heath, Wilson and Powell.

Prince Philip? The Queen? Nabarro?

Of course, if the test of British citizenship is going to follow the Nazi 'Aryan' pattern and become the possession of British grandparents, Prince Philip may soon become due for exclusion. As Lady Gaitskell said in the debate on the Bill in the House of Lords on February 29:

> Lady Gaitskell said she had not been born in Britain, nor had her father although he had lived here for sixty years. Her grandfather had never known this country. When reading Clause 1, she said, it made me feel a little alien. The talk about grandfathers and now grandmothers in Clause 1 has a slight smell of apartheid about it.
>
> The Bill might mean twenty years of queueing. The Duke of Edinburgh would not have a dog's chance of becoming a 'belonger' and jumping the queue, because he had not got the right grandfather. (*The Times* report, March 1, 1968.)

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Indeed, since children born in Britain, who have never seen a foreign country, are now solemnly classified as 'immigrants', the Royal Family will no doubt presently be due to be classified as alien immigrants. And, for that matter, as soon as the genealogical tree is carried a little further, Sir Gerald Nabarro, too. After all, the cry against 'immigrants' is a very old Tory cry. It was a vintage Wodehouse of 1910 (*Psmith in the City*, if memory is not at fault), where the young blades working in a City office under a pompous stuffy bore of an employer, who is of course a Tory candidate, decide to get their revenge by going down to his constituency to heckle him at a public meeting, and find him delivering a fervid address on (Wodehouse is certainly no left propagandist, but an observant chronicler of the current conventional scene) 'The Menace of the Alien Immigrant'. Sixty years ago. And today colour is added to spice the dish.

Kenya Asian Victims and Pawns

Most revealing was the scare about an influx of Kenya Asians threatening to flood the country, which was artificially worked up as a pretext for the hasty consensus of the two Front Benches to rush through Parliament in three days the enactment establishing the Nazi racial formula about grandparents. But what was the truth about the Kenya Asians? When the British rulers decided to build up Kenya as a 'White Man's Paradise' for ex-officers and aristocratic scions to become settlers in the beautiful 'White Highlands' robbed from the Africans, they were faced with the problem that there was no African middle class or suitable religious division to provide a social basis to support the rule of the White handful against the African population. So they decided to import one. Churchill as Colonial Secretary arranged in March, 1922, for Indian migrants to come to Kenya on condition they could produce 300 rupees (an unattainable fortune for the overwhelming majority of Indians) on arrival. 'This', Churchill told the Cabinet, as recorded in the Cabinet Minutes now made available, 'would have the effect of excluding all Indians except those of a certain social standing.' Accordingly the Indians with the requisite financial basis arrived, and occupied the lower administrative and professional and some skilled manual positions, alongside the Indian traders already there. The majority fulfilled their allotted role and gave loyal support to the British rulers against the African national revolt. But with the victory of the African national struggle, and the establishment of independence, what was to happen to the 190,000 Kenya Asians, who had so faith-

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fully served their imperialist masters? Sandys, Colonial Secretary at the time of the transfer in 1963, assured them that, if they did not wish to become Kenya citizens, they could have British passports and enjoy all the rights of British citizenship. The Indian Government recommended them to take Kenya citizenship; and 70,000 did so. But 120,000 preferred the British passport, evidently considering it a safer and more stable basis than the uncertain future in Kenya, where their record had placed them in a somewhat invidious position in relation to the national movement, like the Anglo-Indian community in India after independence.

'Wretched that Hangs on Princes' Favours'

Unfortunately for them, they had backed the wrong horse and lost both ways. When the Kenya Government in December last year brought into force its Immigration Act, requiring those who were not Kenya citizens to apply for work permits (this was not racialist legislation, as has been falsely stated here, for it did not apply to the 70,000 Kenya Asians who had chosen Kenya citizenship), some among the 120,000 Kenya Asians who had chosen British passports felt uncertainty for their future, and sought to avail themselves of their rights, as promised them, to come to Britain. The influx never totalled more than a few thousands (7,000 from all East African territories, according to the British Government's statistics, during the three months from December 1967 when the Kenya Act came into force, to the end of February 1968 when the British Act was put through). But this was used as the pretext by the British imperialists to welsh on their pledges and put through the racialist legislation to keep them out. The Kenya Asians had become a football of British politics. 'This is a British national crisis, not a Kenya crisis', as the Kenya High Commissioner in London said on February 19. The unhappy Kenya Asians affected had lost all round. They were uncertain of their future in Kenya. The Indian Government, which had advised them to take Kenya citizenship, made clear that it had no intention of receiving ex-Indians who had preferred British citizenship. British imperialism, which had used them for its purposes and buoyed them up with empty promises, now gave them the boot. 'I feel mine eyes new-open'd: O how wretched is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!' The whole lesson of the strategy of imperialism, how its pawns become its victims, is epitomised in the parable of the Kenya Asians. And to add the crowning irony, during the two months after the passing of the Act to restrict their entry to a

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limited quota, up to the end of April the allotted quota had not been taken up; there had been only 350 applications for permits to enter, 80 had been granted, but only 5 had been used. The whole scare, on the basis of which the racialist Act had been passed, was thus shown to have been, as *The Guardian* pointed out on April 29, 'artificial'.

Nemesis of Empire

Colour bar racialism is the hallmark of the empire tradition, and especially of Anglo-American imperialism. If American democracy was built on the foundation of Negro slavery, the great British fortunes were built on the African slave trade to supply the United States and the West Indies. It is true that the Arab slave traders were already busy in Africa before the Europeans took over. It is true that the African tribal and feudal chiefs captured and sold their fellow Africans to the European traders. These facts should correct any over-simplified colour picture. But it was only the limitless appetite and dynamism of capitalist production which multiplied the slave trade to such a monstrous scale and desolated Africa. The British Empire was the supreme colour bar empire of the world. 'Whites Only' and 'Chinese and Dogs Not Allowed' were its inspiring slogans wherever the Union Jack flew. But the same memsahibs who would shudder at the proximity of a brown skin would fall over themselves to win the condescending smile of a maharajah, and would have no hesitation in entrusting their babies to a coloured ayah. In other words, the colour bar is not the expression of some supposed instinctive natural prejudice based on colour (colour prejudice is notoriously unknown to children until inculcated into them), but a social phenomenon of capitalist imperialism, the physical expression of colonialist servitude. Similarly 'apartheid' in South Africa is explained by its advocates as a benevolent system to enable two races to develop, each according to its own culture. In fact the principle of relegation of the African majority to limited inferior 'reserves' on which it is impossible for them to live is a technique to compel them to seek employment without rights in the 'white' areas as wage labourers at one-twentieth the white wage or as domestic servants. Thus 'apartheid' is a decorative euphemism for colonial slavery.

Poison of Racialist Theories

The horrors of the slave trade led the pious English slave traders who sang hymns on deck while their African captives rotted and

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died in the holds, to salve their consciences with the theory that the Africans were not really human beings, but a kind of sub-human animal. The American slave owners and exterminators of the Red Indians preached the same doctrine. Their Negro slaves were explicitly excluded by legal decision from their Declaration of Independence that 'all men are created equal'. The European overlords, whose Tory descendants today express such horror at the menace of being overrun by coloured immigrants, had no compunction in overrunning without entry visas the homelands of these coloured peoples, not as immigrants to seek employment, but as violent invaders and conquerors to subjugate them and make them slaves. This overrunning, plunder and subjugation of the Asian, American and African continents was declared to be justified on the grounds of the 'divine mission' of the 'superior white race' to rule the 'lesser breeds'. In vain all serious scientists have exploded the fallacies of these racial theories of supposed 'higher' and 'lower' races. The poison of racialism will not be eliminated simply by intellectual argument, because it is the reflection and expression of an entire social system of special national, economic and social exploitation made visible in terms of colour, derived from the days of direct slavery and colonial subjection, and persisting still in the existing social structure and traditional consciousness in the foremost imperialist countries, especially in the United States and in Britain. Against this the battle is now rising, with the advance of the fight for human liberation and for the final ending of colonialism. This fight is an integral part of the whole common battle for democracy and socialism, and for the destruction of the social system which rests on the triple foundation of wage slavery, the inequality of women, and, on the lowest rung of the ladder, colour bar oppression and super-exploitation.

Ernest Bevin and Labour Imperialism

With this social background for generations, there should be no ground for surprise that the poison of racialism, or support of divisions and antagonisms based on colour, should also infect sections, and even considerable sections, of the working class and popular opinion in the metropolitan countries of imperialism, especially where the right-wing leadership has fostered imperialist illusions, or in the present era of imperialist break-up has brought a sense of frustration. Typical embodiment of the outlook of Labour Imperialism in the leading circles of the movement was Ernest Bevin.

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When he became Foreign Secretary he said: 'The most important objective of my foreign policy is just to be able to go down to Victoria Station and take a ticket to where the hell I like without a passport'. This was actually applauded as a remarkably 'enlightened' 'progressive' viewpoint. Of course it was the opposite. If he had said that the objective of his foreign policy would be to ensure that any black, brown or yellow person could enter Britain freely without any passport control, it might have been remarkable. But he said the opposite. He demanded that he, the lord of creation, should be able to march into anybody else's country ('where the hell I like') without any interference by damned foreigners inhabiting that country—a characteristic expression of the colossal egoism of the imperialist outlook. His actual foreign policy fully corresponded to his imperialist outlook.

Black Marks on the Record

Assumptions of Empire have been inextricably intertwined in the so-called 'British School of Socialism'. Not only the Fabian Society produced the theory of Fabian Imperialism with its *Fabianism and the Empire* to support the predatory South African war at the turn of the century. Blatchford and Hyndman were ultra-chauvinists. Across the water Jack London, the inspiring epic novelist of socialist revolution, could also write:

> Negroes have a very strong and disagreeable odour . . . In reason they are much inferior to whites; in imagination they are dull, tasteless and anomalous. Their griefs are transient.

H. G. Wells, with all his brilliant socialist-inspired predictions of the future, could in his *When the Sleeper Wakes*, where he imagines a future revolution of the working people against the ruling monopoly oligarchy, predict its suppression by the arrival of fleets of aeroplanes carrying hordes of gleaming black faces to carry out the work of suppression—a revealing reversal of the true course of history. In 1926 at the World Migration Conference organised by the Labour and Socialist International and the International Federation of Trade Unions the ILP vainly sought to move an amendment that 'immigrants should not be excluded purely on grounds of race or colour'. This was opposed by the Labour Party and the delegates from the British Dominions. At this Conference Lajpat Rai from India said:

> By your present attitude you are throwing the whole of the coloured peoples of the world in the scales against you in the struggle against capitalism (*Daily Herald*, June 25, 1926).

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In 1964 a Gallup poll showed 20 per cent of the population demanding a complete ban on coloured immigrants; but the highest proportion supporting this demand was among Labour Party supporters, with 25 per cent, as against 18 per cent among Liberals and 14 per cent among Conservatives. With knowledge of this background we should by no means discount the current Gallup poll immediately after the Powell speech showing 74 per cent of those questioned supporting his remarks on coloured immigrants.

Bull At a Gate

When a number of London dockers, with records of militancy and solidarity, or of Smithfield meat porters demonstrated and even came out on strike in support of the arch-enemy of the trade unions and the working class, Powell, for his racialist remarks on coloured immigrants, it is necessary first to understand the feelings of those thus temporarily misled into the wrong camp. The English nation was the first nation to be sacrificed to the Empire. In order to incorporate the conquest of Scotland and Wales the English nation had to disappear in official language and be replaced by an imaginary 'British' nation of synthetic 'Britons'.* In compensation they were given the privilege to invade and conquer other people's countries all over the world; they were exhorted to cease to be 'Little Englanders' and to 'think imperially'. In those conquered countries of Asia and Africa they became little lords, with the coloured inhabitants as scum and dirt beneath their feet. Today it is daily dinned into them in every newspaper that they have lost their empire; that Britain has come down in the world. The old hard-won strongholds of father-to-son monopolies in the docks or Smithfield are being razed by the bulldozer of rationalisation (it is notable that the leader of the dockers' march for Powell had been the leader of an opposition group to the London Port Liaison Committee and the champion of the Devlin reorganisation scheme, while the leader in Smithfield had stood as a Mosleyite candidate). The Labour Government's failure has spread disillusionment. And now these coloured former subject peoples, that had been dirt under their feet, have come swarming into Britain—well, not actually into the docks or Smithfield, but the pictures of a huge flood of coloured immigrants overrunning Britain has been plentifully given them by the press and Mr. Powell, while solemn Front Bench spokesmen

* Except in poetry. The poet could not sing: 'Oh to be in Great Britain now that April's there!' or 'If I should die, think only this of me: that there's some corner of a foreign field that is forever Great Britain.'

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dilate upon 'the problem'. Thereby all the primitive instincts of national distrust of the incursion of foreigners with strange habits, together with the trade unionist traditions of resistance to any invasion of jobs monopolies, are now reinforced and dramatised in terms of colour. Everything that has been familiar and secure seems shaking. The bull is angry.

Picador and Matador

At this point the astute Mr. Powell waves a red rag in front of the bull—it is these coloured immigrants that are the cause of all his troubles, that threaten his jobs, that overcrowd the housing, that burden the social services. The bull charges. We can be sure that there will be another picador and another to wave red rag after red rag for the bull to charge and exhaust his strength. And when the bull has exhausted his strength, the matador will step in to deliver the death-blow. To prevent this outcome it is not enough to lecture the bull and say: 'Dear beloved bull, let us reason this matter together on an intellectual plane. Let me give you some statistics.' It is necessary to turn the anger of the bull against the real enemy.

'Black Power'

But if it is essential to understand the feelings of those white workers who are misled into a camp of antagonism to the coloured immigrant workers, how much more is it essential to understand the feelings, and approach with full sympathy every expression, however wild and violent and reckless, of the most oppressed and exploited section in Britain today, the coloured immigrant workers? Did they leave their beautiful sunny homelands, all the ties of their own people and language and culture, for love of the cold and grime and hostility of an alien Britain? It was imperialism that plundered the wealth and throttled the economy of their own countries. Poverty drives them to emigrate in the desperate search for employment. And here they find themselves held down to the worst, the most menial and least paid jobs, subjected to the worst housing conditions, pent up in 'black ghettoes', regarded by many with suspicion and even hostility, and turned into a football of local political animosities, or made the scapegoat for national and local misgovernment, to cover the real sins of the big landlords, money-lenders and monopolists who exploit them and all the workers. Against these conditions they are in revolt; and their struggle against these conditions is the just struggle of the most heavily exploited

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section of the working class, and the common interest of the whole working class. If some of their spokesmen seek to express this struggle in terms of the slogan 'Black Power', originating in the very different conditions of the United States and adapted by these spokesmen for use here, it is necessary, before rushing into controversy on the variety of interpretations of this slogan or censoriously condemning it as an alleged 'black racialism', to understand first the emotional feeling and positive content which wins support among significant sections for such a slogan: the desire for independence, self-respect, strength of organisation and positive militant action in place of dependence on the generosity and benevolence of the ruling authorities. All this is characteristic of the initial stage of struggle of every heavily exploited section of the working class, and can play its full part in the common struggle. There is need for independent strong representative associations of coloured workers in Britain, to assist their organisations and voice their claims, alongside joint bodies of coloured and white workers and of inter-racial co-operation to promote the common struggle against racialism.

Solidarity

The battle against racialism requires unity and strength, both nationally and internationally. While surrender on the part of some sections of white workers to Powellism represents the most dangerous breach of working class solidarity, it is also necessary to be on guard against interpretations of the slogan 'Black Power' in terms that could divide the common fight of the workers. A programme document 'Black Power in Britain', published by the Universal Coloured People's Association, has said: 'Coloured peoples all over the world, wherever they live, wherever they are born, wherever they go, drink the same waters of affliction from the same man. The White Man.' This is an over-simplification. The horizon of the writers of this document is confined to the United States, the West Indies, Britain and Africa, and here they see only the identity of Ian Smith and Wilson or 'Anglo-Saxon fascism' as the enemy. They ignore the militant workers, the rest of the world, especially the socialist world, yet present their picture as applying 'all over the world'. How does their picture apply to the Uzbeks? Tajiks? Mongolians? Chinese? Was Stalin, the Georgian Asiatic, 'oppressed'? The classless antithesis of all 'Coloured' against all 'Whites' conceals class relations and the realities of capitalism and imperialism. The rich oil sheikhs or the Tata and Birla multi-millionaires are treated

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as oppressed, and the starving white in a slum as an oppressor. Victory in the fight against racialism requires the strongest working class solidarity. It requires internationally the united action of all the forces opposed to racialism: the socialist world, the newly independent countries, the national liberation movement and the working class in the imperialist countries, alongside the broadest range of democratic supporters. Whatever hinders such unity or promotes division plays into the hands of racialism and imperialism.

Responsibility of the Labour Movement

The greatest responsibility in the fight against racialism in this country rests on the entire labour movement. In face of all the dangerous currents of racialist and chauvinist illusions and conceptions in the climate of an imperialist country, it is an achievement of the class-conscious workers, socialists, communists and militant trade unionists, to have established recognition of the principles of internationalism and opposition to racialism in the working class organisations, in the trade unions and political bodies, drawing together white and non-white workers in the common working class struggle. But there is still a great deal to be done in the fight against the special subjection and discrimination which victimises coloured workers; and the present Race Relations Bill, while a significant step forward, is still an incomplete step in the legal field. There is still much to be done in combating the infection of racialist poison among white workers, especially where this is concealed inside issues of job protection, demarcation or promotion; nor can we forget that at last year's Trades Union Congress, alongside all the progressive resolutions adopted, the resolution on this issue was brushed under the carpet by the chairman's ruling. There is a battle to be fought; and it is bound up with the whole present critical battle for the future of the labour movement and of socialism.

R.P.D.

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ENGINEERS' LESSON IN LOYALTY

J. R. Foster *

THE livelihood of one-eighth of the British wage-earning population is the single factor in the battle now raging between engineering workers and their employers but, in reality, the greater issue is the destiny of the whole working class.

The National Committee of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers, the major union within the engineering industry, on April 29, 1968, after fierce debate, decided to fire the first salvo with a one-day token stoppage on May 15, followed up by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions' decision to take further punitive action if the employers continue their intransigent attitude. To understand this volatile situation, the background and prerequisites require examination.

At the 1967 National Committee of the AEF, the complex manoeuvring to include in a major policy resolution every outstanding issue and claim, aimed at swamping the single issue of wages, was defeated. This, after endorsement by the 29 other engineering unions making up the Confederation, became the current claim before the Engineering Employers' Federation.

On October 31, 1967, the unions submitted the long-term claim:

A substantial increase in basic rates.
A shorter working week.
Increased overtime pay for both week-ends and ordinary week-days.
Longer annual holidays.
Non-contributory pension schemes.
Equal rates for all male and female engineering workers.
Improvements to the Guaranteed Week.

Wages, holidays and equal rights clearly stand out as the major issues.

The unions, itemising the actual effort of the engineering workers, drew attention to production increases in engineering and electrical goods which, since 1958, had increased 6 per cent per year on average, with hours rising by less than 0.3 per cent per year, adding that projected production trends up to 1970 indicate an index point change from 149 at the end of 1966 to 172 by 1970—an increase of

* Mr. Foster, writing here in a personal capacity, is, as readers will know, a National Organiser of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers.

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17 per cent on the 1966 trend, with projected total hours of all operatives increasing by just over 1 per cent. The top fifteen federated engineering companies have enjoyed:

Name of company	Net profit (before Int. and Tax) £ million 1966/67	Capital employed £ million 1966/67	Employees (000's) 1966/67
Guest Keen & Nettlefold	32.6	293	108.7
Hawker Siddeley	17.4	252	106.0
Assoc. Elec. Ind.	13.1	219	90.0
Eng. Electrical	20.3	209	80.0
British Motor Holdings	21.5	166	120.0
Vickers	6.5	127	51.0
Leyland Motors	16.8	124	56.0
Brit. Oxygen	12.0	117	30.0
Gen. Electric	20.7	111	64.7
Plessey Co.	13.0	98	65.0
Rolls-Royce	8.9	81	49.7
Int. Computers	4.3	61	23.7
Brit. Elec. Trac.	8.8	58	—
BAC	5.1	55	34.9
Elecl. & Musical	11.7	52	27.3
	£212.6 m.†	£2,025 m.†	907.4†

These protracted negotiations broke down on April 18, 1968, when the employers rejected an overall increase but offered to improve the *minimum pay level* for all grades over a period of three years which, at the end, would yield £15 7s. 8d. for a skilled fitter and £12 7s. 4d. for a labourer. The attached qualifications required the unions to embark upon radical changes involving greater utilisation of productive forces; techniques for analysing or evaluating methods of production; mobility; flexibility and transferability. Conditions aimed at rocking, to say the least, countless time-honoured customs and practices . . . for nothing.

Hardly referring to the other aspects of the claim, they were not prepared to move on holidays and, without accepting the principle

† The totals given above are taken from the published report of proceedings of a special conference between the Engineering Employers' Federation and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions on October 31, 1967, but the totals should be: £212.7 m., £2,023 m. and 907.0 respectively.

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of equal pay, agreed to discuss the women's claim. Is it any wonder that Hugh Scanlon refers to the employers' approach as 'monumental inefficiency' and the offer itself 'a calculated insult'?

The tenacity which engineering workers brought to bear in their one-day stoppage on May 15, 1968, affecting 3 million workers, is evidence of the intense feeling. It is however, unlikely, that the Engineering Employers' Federation will 'climb down' having regard to their past declarations when, in 1957, they were prepared to 'fight it out' with the unions. This hard-faced group seeks to place Self above all else and the spots on these particular leopards have never changed.

Apart from having Government backing in their stand, these employers, the most avid defenders of class privilege, profit and property, see themselves as a major bastion in defence of the Government's Prices and Incomes Policy. If they can defeat the engineers, additionally, they retard every hope of the working class and buttress anew the now classic rôle of a discredited Government.

What other reward can the employers seek to achieve? Doubtless, they will demand nothing less than the worst features of the Royal Commission's enquiry into the trade unions.

The greater dilemma for the right wing is that in their endeavours to make capitalism work, they turn to the system's most vigorous advocates, who never will, or even attempt to, make the most minimal propositions of the Labour Government work—whether in nationalisation or in labourising industrial relations.

While Scanlon has repeatedly stated that the unions must first resolve their problems at the negotiating table, nevertheless the Prices and Incomes Bill casts a ghoul-like shadow over the whole scene. This must have influenced the minds of the 1968 National Committee delegates who, after the visit of Barbara, shattered the resolution calling for support for the Government's prices and incomes policy, thus demonstrating clearly that engineering trade unionists understand where their loyalty lies.

The sickening attitude of leading Government spokesmen, echoed by most employers, who, by calling for increased productivity, arrogantly imply the laziness of workers (and some have actually said this) is answered in the engineers' telling contribution to the common pool of the nation's resources. As man stands on the very lip of space, it is these workers who, with their hands and brains, actually wrought the miracles of producing from iron ore the wonders of this modern technological age. Such wonders are not performed

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by those who pontificate from the House of Commons, board-rooms, City, or Zürich, but by workers and skilled craftsmen, whose rate stands at the magnificent sum of £12 17s. 8d.

During the last decade or more, most active workers have been aware of the insults heaped upon militant engineers—described variously as 'clunk-heads', 'werewolves', with every display of rank and file activity censored. After containment within the establishment, the era concluded with the infamous 1964 three-year 'Package Deal', yielding to a skilled man a total of 10s. a week increase.

The backlash was inevitable; militants were determined to establish a change in policy and leadership as the essential prerequisite to an improved standard of living. These basic objectives were crystallised in the qualitative value of a broad left unity seldom seen in this important sector of the working class. The need was there and the subsequent hard-fought campaign resulted in the stupendous left-wing victory of Hugh Scanlon as President of the AEF, thus adding a vital ingredient to the struggle of the engineers.

While the evidence, graphs, mathematical calculations and backed-up research techniques play a vital part, it is infinitesimal compared with the power which lies within the working class. Once unleashed, this power puts the achievement of this particular claim in its correct perspective: given maximum involvement and widest support, it can defeat ill-begotten reactionary policies, change the course of the Government and open up the road our class must tread in order to achieve the full fruits of the wealth they produce and their final emancipation.

THE TUC's CENTURY

Allen Hutt

IT seems a far enough cry from the bombing of the house of a blackleg Sheffield saw-grinder in the late 1860s—an event by no means unconnected with the gathering of the first Trades Union Congress at Manchester in June 1868—to next month's Buckingham Palace Garden Parties and Guildhall banquet (with the Queen as chief guest) which form part of the TUC Centenary celebrations. Her Late Majesty Victoria would no doubt have quite failed to credit that the hated 'trades unions' could so ceremonially become part of the Establishment. More significant, however, are certain

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historical similarities between the TUC's first meeting and its Centenary. The 34 delegates who answered the call of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council in 1868 met in the Mechanics' Institute, David Street, in the shadow of the first Royal Commission on Trade Unions. The thousands who will meet and demonstrate this month and the next in honour of the Centenary do so in the shadow of the latest Royal Commission on Trade Unions. The Commission of 1867, arising among other things from the hullaballoo over the 'Sheffield outrages', led to the Trade Union Acts 1871-76, an important step forward in legalisation. The current Commission may well recommend serious inroads into the full legalisation achieved by the Act of 1906.

Thus the Centenary falls at a critical moment for trade unionism and its central body, the now nearly nine-million strong TUC. The moment is critical, of course, not only in respect of the legal position of the unions but even more, perhaps, in respect of their role *vis-à-vis* the 'incomes policy' attempts of the Labour Government to solve Britain's economic crisis at the expense of the working people; of this more below. Meantime it is ironic to note how utterly unchanged are the outbursts of anti-union spleen; a valuable selection of documents of 1867-68, just published, reproduces an hysterical extract from the Quarterly Review absolutely of a piece with any current Tory denunciation of shipyard workers, newspaper printers or other supposed 'restrictive practice' villains.* We have, indeed, been here before.

Why, let us ask, is this 100-year anniversary by far the most important that the British Labour movement has to celebrate? It is because all the basic issues have arisen, and been fought out, in the TUC; the Labour Party, after all, was the creation of the TUC —the conference of 1900 which launched the Labour Representation Committee (as the Party was initially called) arose from a resolution of the Plymouth TUC in 1899. Furthermore, the history of the TUC consistently and conclusively shows that the whole movement advances when what may be broadly called the Socialist Left carries the day, while it is retarded when the class-collaborating right is the winner.

Here we can do no more than illuminate some high spots of the process. First came the crucial decade of the 1880s, when Britain

* 1868: *Year of the Unions*—a Documentary Survey edited with an introduction by Edmund Frow and Michael Katanka (*Michael Katanka Books*, 35s.), pp. 131-150. A report of the 1868 TUC, and the principal union evidence to the Royal Commission of 1867, are included in this instructive volume.

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reached the end of the 'workshop of the world' epoch and faced a crisis as fundamental as the one we face today. The Gladstonian Liberal leadership of the exclusive craft unions, typified by TUC secretary Henry Broadhurst, was helpless; confronted by unprecedented unemployment and economic ruin the TUC's attitude was one of 'contemptuous inactivity', as the Webbs put it. The change to the 'New Unionism', the mass organisation of the unskilled, which revolutionised trade unionism at the turn of the 80s and 90s, raising TUC affiliations from 885,000 in 1889 to 1,470,000 in 1890, was entirely the work of the newly emerging Socialists—Tom Mann, John Burns, Eleanor Marx, Keir Hardie.

Following the triumphs of the Gasworkers and the Dockers in 1889 the fight was carried into the TUC. Broadhurst's denunciations of Hardie ('Those who spread dissensions in the unions . . . sowing the seeds of disruption . . . hound these creatures from our midst') read exactly like any anti-Communist diatribe of our own day. But the Socialist-led union forces were too strong for the Broadhursts; at the Liverpool TUC in 1890 a resolution demanding a legal eight-hour day (then the central issue) was carried. Later, at the Norwich TUC of 1894, this Socialist victory was followed up by the adoption of a complete nationalisation resolution.

Unfortunately divisions among the Socialists (the opportunism of some, the sectarianism of others) enabled the Right to stage a comeback at the Cardiff TUC of 1895. What they contrived to do was of sinister, as well as lasting, significance. The local trades councils, which had fathered the TUC, were excluded (though they never have been from the Scottish TUC, to its great advantage), the card vote was introduced, and delegation was limited to union officials and those working at their trade (which shut out Socialists like Burns, Hardie and others). Thus on the eve of the trade union movement entering politics the conditions were created for a disastrous divorce between Socialism and trade unionism.

Two decades later World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917 brought a new intensity to the Left-Right struggle. While the union apparatus became 'part of the social machinery of the State', to quote the Webbs, there was a general development of militant workshop organisation (the shop stewards), spearhead of the 'Hands Off Russia' movement which reached its height in the Councils of Action of 1920, a demonstration of international solidarity greatly helping to spike the guns of anti-Soviet intervention. A special TUC in December 1919—called to discuss the transformation of its

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old, ineffective central body, the Parliamentary Committee, into a 'General Staff of Labour'—authorised the dispatch of a delegation to Russia. Eventually this went as a joint TUC-Labour Party group; its *Report* (1920) was significant, though in no way as extensive and important as the report of the TUC delegation of 1924 (*Russia: the Official Report of the British Trade Union Delegation*, 1925), recording how 'in Russia the workers are the ruling class' and that the Soviet system 'so far from being undemocratic . . . gives in many respects to the individual a more real and reasonable opportunity of participation in public affairs than does Parliamentary government'.†

The 1924 delegation went at a time when the Left forces in the TUC were surging forward, centring on the Minority Movement, a mass grouping of Communist and other militant trade unionists led by Tom Mann and Harry Pollitt. The climax was reached at the Scarborough TUC of 1925, when an openly revolutionary resolution was carried by 3,082,000 to 79,000. In this spirit the movement went forward to the greatest class confrontation of British history, the General Strike of May 1926.

So, as the Centenary celebrations start, we arrive at the present day. The 'incomes policy' and State intervention in collective bargaining of the Wilson Government is bringing it more surely to disaster than the wage-freeze policy of Sir Stafford Cripps 20 years ago brought the Attlee Government to disaster. But within the TUC the cleavage is wider, the Left stronger, in 1968 than it was in 1948. On this it is only necessary to cite the votes on the General Council's 'voluntary' wage-restraint policy at the last two Conferences of Trade Union Executives; in March 1967 the General Council won hands down by 7,604,000 to 963,000, in February 1968 it scraped through by 4,620,000 to 4,084,000—a Pyrrhic victory indeed. Clearly the point is being well taken (as I put it in my Presidential address to the NUJ annual delegate meeting in April) that 'unless the trade union movement digs in its heels and fights, it will cease to have any basic function'.

† Neither of these reports, which played a vital part in informing contemporary opinion, receives so much as a mention in the relevant section of *The History of the TUC* 1868-1968, the official 'Pictorial Survey' attractively produced for the TUC by Mr. Cecil King's Hamlyn Group (Hardback 17s. 6d.; paperback 12s. 6d.). Generally the text of this picture-book needs treating with caution: see its quaint disposal of William Morris as 'a progenitor of Guild Socialism', its dismissal of Tom Mann as a 'syndicalist' of 1910-12, or its Alice in Wonderland reference to Communists in the WFTU 'bent on waging the cold war'.

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THE ARTS TODAY

Edited by Stuart Douglass

TALKING TO KATHLEEN TRESSELL

Robert Tressell, whose real name was Robert Noonan, wrote the classic working-class novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists.* He died of TB in 1911, leaving a daughter, Kathleen. Until Stuart Douglass's adaptation of the novel was shown on BBC television last year, she was believed to have died many years ago in a car crash in Canada. But she turned out to be alive—now 75 years old—and living in the village of Winchcombe, Gloucestershire. Stuart Douglass went there with Ann and Stephen Sedley earlier this year and recorded a long interview with Kathleen Noonan Lynne, from which we present some extracts.

From the photograph that I've seen of your father he looks a very impressive man but he looks rather fearsome.

Yes I know. That's the kind of look he had sometimes.

Was that posed in a studio?

Yes, that's in South Africa.

How do you remember him best from his appearance?

Well, I remember his hair was quite thin on top, and he had a kind of sandy moustache.

Do you remember him smiling a lot?

Well, he was mostly a cheerful individual, you know, lots of humour.

He was a very just man. He had a flaming sense of justice, you might say. He had absolutely no use for any humbug or hypocrisy or anything like that. I would never dream of telling my father a lie. Whatever I might do, no matter how bad it was, the lie would be much worse than what I'd done.

He'd work late, after I'd gone to bed, because I used to read in bed, as I still do, and I remember him saying 'Is your light out?'—'No'—'Well put it out at once'—so I put out my light. But I was at a very exciting part of the book, and after a while I put it on again, And he came out, and ooh, fireworks! I'd lied—and I *hadn't* lied because I *had* put it out!

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One of my father's greatest friends was a Roman Catholic priest. He'd come to the house and they used to talk right into the night. And you see he's got nothing in [the book] about Roman Catholics, but he had those other men. He was an agnostic, but he was the most Christian living man that I've ever met. He'd give the clothes off his back to people. He'd often go without himself in order to give. And he was a most compassionate man. But he had no use for those people who were supposed to be Christians and yet lived utterly un-Christian lives. And those seemed to be the only kind he seemed to meet!

I went to a Roman Catholic school. It was right on the side of some steps, and then you crossed the road and went up more steps and up across the hill. There was St. Andrew's Church of England school down at the bottom of the steps. At the top you'd meet:

'Roman Catholic, ring the bell,
When you die, you'll go to hell.'

When we were in Millwood Road there was an election, Arthur Du Cros [in the book Sir Graball d'Encloseland], Freeman Thomas; and Arthur and I were hanging out of the drawing room window singing:

'Don't vote for either of the bounders,
Throw old Thomas in the sea,
Du Cros is no good, he wants to tax your food,
Socialism is the thing for you and me.'

My aunt came along with: 'You don't have to behave like hooligans'. You see, she was very proper. The one in St. Leonards also was very proper, and Dad wasn't in favour at all with the rest of the family, because he shows he was going to try to make things better for the working man.

I remember I was very anti-British. I can remember in the convent, we used to have to say our prayers at night, and everyone would be praying for the British to win, and I used to be praying for the Boers to win. I knew, and I suppose it must have been from [my father] that the real reason for the Boer War was the diamond mines.

I remember in the convent some English Officers came—I must have been an awful kid—they came and gave us all little Union Jack buttons, you know. I wasn't going to wear any Union Jack button! I threw that button down and I put my foot on it and twisted it around a few times. I don't remember what happened to me but I can remember doing that. And we had a concert and I was the baby of the school and in the middle of this chorus when they sang 'God save the Queen', I sat down!

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We always had to speak French at meals. You see my mother was French. Dad himself could speak about seven languages. One of the great things about the book was that it was [supposed to be] written by an ignorant uneducated working man. Well you see, Dad was a working man but he had the groundwork of a good upbringing. There's another thing about how exasperated he'd get with the men that he was working with, because everything was good enough for the likes of them. I don't think it ever occurred to him that one of the reasons why he'd get so mad about it was because he had had a good childhood, he knew what it was like to be well fed and well clothed; therefore he could see and he couldn't see why they'd be so stupid and put up with anything, when there wasn't really any need if they had some gumption.

The wall was full of books of all kinds. He had Plutarch's *Lives*, he had Macaulay, he had Josephus, he had books on religion, the *Poetics* of Aristotle, and university magazines. There were some there that I wasn't supposed to read—and I didn't read them, mind you. I don't remember him having any of Marx. I suppose he must have had, because he had all kinds of philosophical works. Then he had Zola and Huxley, Spencer and Paine.

One of the pictures on the wall was an engraving of Dr. Johnson saving Oliver Goldsmith from his landlady. You see, my father was such that if anybody wanted anything and he could possibly give it to them, he'd give it. He had a drawing on the mantlepiece one time . . . I think it was worth fifty pounds. Somebody came round admiring it and he gave it to them. For my birthday he'd given me a whole collection of the Burlington Prints: that would be the kind of thing he'd give me for a present.

What do you remember of him winding up his affairs before he left for Liverpool? Anything?

No. He wrote to me from the hospital. I wasn't worried about him being in the hospital. He was very cheerful. He spoke about decorating the ward for Christmas. And he'd been sick before and he'd got better, so I just naturally expected him to get better. And then on the 3rd of February 1911 I got a telegram: 'Your father died at 10.15 last night'.

I had nowhere to go. I had no money. They talk about the manuscript tied up in a pink ribbon. It wasn't. He had made a box for it—you know the kind of thing, like cash boxes, that type of box—and I took it and had it at the bottom of my trunk and I never did anything about it.

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Robert Tressell, author of 'The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists', and his daughter Kathleen in 1902.

The picture on the opposite page shows Kathleen Noonan Lynne as she is today.

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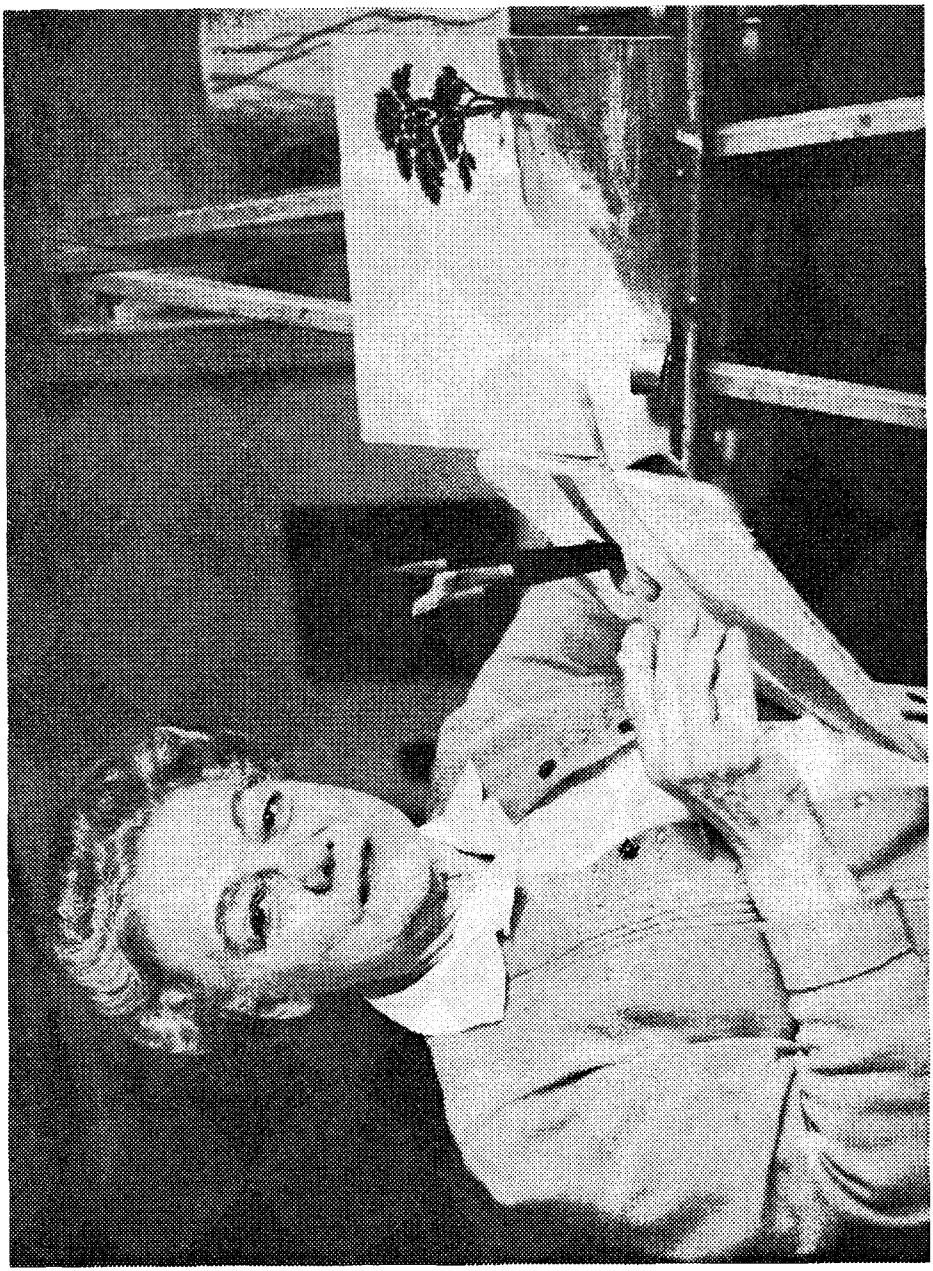

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Brian
Blain

JAZZ TODAY AND TOMORROW

(Concluding the article published in our April issue)

IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE to make theoretical statements about the future probable course of development, or decline, of jazz. What we do know is that in its six or so decades of existence its rate of progress and its influence as a music have been phenomenal. As a 'pure' music it has moved from the relative naïveté of its earliest practitioners to encompass the most sophisticated techniques of performance and imagination, embracing at certain points almost the whole of European theoretical conceptions, with the notable exception of architectural structure and form, considered outmoded anyway among wide circles of contemporary composers.

At the same time, and this is perhaps even more significant, jazz and blues have changed the whole *sound* of popular music in the Western world during the course of this century. In addition there are few areas now in 'practical' music-making such as film and TV scores, background tapes in pubs and supermarkets, and even hard sell commercial advertising jingles, which are not affected by neo-jazz styles and techniques.

It is precisely this all-pervading aspect of jazz-like sounds and the continuing links with the broad spectrum of popular music which create the paradoxes and problems for the dedicated jazz performer in Britain today. He is at one and the same time a part of the popular tradition (e.g. if he is over twenty-five he will almost certainly have learnt the basis of his craft in the hit or miss tradition of pub, jazz club and palais) and yet his music has moved into a more specialised world of its own, in a sense in artistic competition with the whole area of orthodox music-making, yet without the structure of administration, education, patronage and subsidy which makes the existence and growth of the orthodox music world possible on the scale that it exists today.

Twenty years ago the Marxist critic Sidney Finkelstein could categorise jazz as the first urban folk music, a folk music of the proletariat, albeit the American one. Although there are many critics who might scoff at this description it was, and still is in many respects, an accurate definition even for Britain. The decline of the old music hall and Viennese tradition of popular music meant that there was a vacuum to be filled and even before the New Orleans revival in the forties (an interesting diversion from the mainstream and in retrospect something of a red herring) it was the tradition of the twenties and thirties dance music which laid the essential foundations out of which the jazz scene grew. Certainly it was the only field in which the jazz-inclined player could work at that time. All of which meant that the jazz musician was for the most part geared to the working and lower middle classes and the entertainment that they required. Then for a while, in the fifties, 'pure' jazz coincided with certain sections of the entertainment business, at first in the big touring band boom and later in the 'trad' era of Bilk and Barber. The interests of large numbers of young people and their relative economic emancipation meant that for a little while 'jazz was king' and the musicians, to an extent, were lulled into a state of

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false security by their deceptively inflated popularity.

But just as the young Negro musician has found that rock 'n roll has cut the ground from under his feet and to an extent isolated him musically even from his own people, a similar fate has overtaken the young British musician: it is a long, long time since much jazz was heard in the palais. In a nutshell, jazz has ceased to be 'subsidised' by popular music, except in the few cases where some of the moderately successful touring blues bands use jazz musicians.

For the first time ever a proportion of the new generation of jazz musicians, many of them better trained academically than their predecessors but lacking the security of regular working environments in which to consolidate that training, are being forced to consider their place in society, and to wonder how they can affect some of the decision-making which takes place in relation to public spending on the arts. This was one of the reasons for the formation on the one hand, of the Fellowship of British Jazz Musicians last year, and, on the other, some burgeoning signs of awareness of the role that the Musicians' Union, to which many belong, could play in helping to affect the policies of the great middle class cultural establishments. In addition, they see the need to tackle some of the problems raised by the huge entertainment monopoly of the Grade Empire whose fingers reach down even into the jazz world and virtually control the whole vitally important field of the import of foreign musicians.

It is indeed ironic that now, with possibly more creative jazz musicians than ever before, there is less opportunity for their work to be put before the public, or for them even to make a living as professional musicians. This is the central problem for the contemporary jazz musician in this country today.

As Ian Carr, one of our most imaginative and intelligent jazzmen and co-leader of possibly the most satisfying unit working in jazz in this country, said in the course of a panel discussion on the future of jazz organised by the Communist Party Music Group about three years ago, 'We have had all the arguments about styles—mainstream, dixieland, bebop, *avant-garde*, free form and all the rest of it . . . the real problem is one of creating environments where the music can be heard'. And whilst I don't entirely subscribe to the cultural soup kitchen concepts which are never far away from some people's ideas on Section 132 of the Local Government Act, I think that until such time as a thorough social revolution raises the whole tempo of artistic activity, breaks the economic stranglehold of the entertainment monopolies, at the same time as blowing some fresh air down the corridors of power at the BBC, the vigorous campaigning around that section of the Act which deals with local authorities' responsibilities to the Arts and Entertainments is the most worthwhile activity for the interested layman or labour movement activist to involve himself in, in order to encourage performing artists of all kinds,

AWARD FOR ANNE DYSON

Our congratulations go to Miss Anne Dyson, who has won the 1968 Clarence Derwent award, presented by Equity, the actors' union, for the best supporting actress in Britain. Miss Dyson, who gained the award for her performance as Mrs. Gascoyne in *The Daughter-in-Law* by D. H. Lawrence, wrote her Declaration of Intent in the May *Labour Monthly*.

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"I SEE ENOCH POWELL'S BEEN AWARDED THE IRON CROSS BY VON THADDEN"

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IMPRESSIONS OF BIAFRA

Margot Parish *

IN April this year, the Britain-Biafra Association was invited by the Biafran Government to send three of its members to Biafra as guests of the Government and people. I was fortunate to be one of those delegates.

As we landed at Port Harcourt one of the first people I met was an Irish priest who complained bitterly at the behaviour of the BBC. He said the BBC had continually broadcast reports of the capture of the towns and villages by Nigerian troops, 'when we knew full well it was not true'. And this was the complaint of all the British people I met in Biafra.

We visited a refugee camp near Owerri and on the way our driver told us of the suffering of the people. 'There is not a family unaffected by this war. This is our war, we will never go back into Nigeria, we would all rather die than go back'. This was the story every single person told us.

Several of the refugees in this camp are refugees two or three times over—from Northern Nigeria to Nsukka, from Nsukka to Enugu, and then again from Enugu. They are becoming integrated with the local population who nourish and console them, while many of the men return to the villages from which they have fled, to become guerrillas.

We spent a whole afternoon at Aba General Hospital talking to wounded soldiers and civilians, many of them from minority areas. The hospital was crowded, patients lying on blankets on the floor, between and under the beds. Most of the work, apart from the nursing, is carried out by the voluntary labour of the local population. Here again the story was the same: 'We would rather die than go back into Nigeria'.

The morale of the soldiers was very high, all they wanted was to get back to the front. Even one young officer whose leg had been amputated assured me cheerfully that he was going back to command guerrillas. One young nurse from a minority area told me her people were fully behind Biafra and the war. 'We did have some disputes with the Ibos before the war, but now we are together in the war and we can sort out our differences afterwards'.

* Margot Parish is Secretary of the Britain-Biafra Association. We print her account of her visit as a first-hand picture of her impressions of the situation there.

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We also visited the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Umuahia, which is not quite so overcrowded as Aba although it has double the number of patients than before the war. Many of the staff are British, working round the clock with their Biafran colleagues. I asked one young nurse from Liverpool, Sister Travis, if she did not want to go home. 'No', she said proudly, 'I consider it a privilege to be allowed to work among these people'. And I think that expressed the feeling of all the British staff.

We saw the relics of the Nigerian 2nd Division, destroyed at Abagana on the road from Enugu to Onitsha. A solid mile and a half of lorries and armoured cars, burnt out and exploded shells and cartridges—a mass of twisted and burnt metal. The destruction of this convoy was one of Biafra's greatest military victories. It was a sinister sight. On the doors of churches, Nigerians had chalked 'We come not to worship but destroy' and on a deserted palm wine shop they had written 'No more Biafra—One Nigeria'. We saw the first ever 'Made in Biafra' 120 millimetre mortar shell, and watched it fired at the retreating Nigerians six miles away.

We also saw the bomb damage at Aba where 38 people were killed in one raid. A market had been severely damaged but fortunately it was empty—the people were away on a 'combing' operation, searching the bush for Nigerian infiltrators. After bombing, the planes return and strafe the civilians with bullets. We saw buildings, cars and ambulances riddled with bullets from this strafing, and many civilians in hospital were wounded by the bullets.

We had an interview with Chief Bassey, Provincial Administrator of Annang, a minority area. He told us that the day before, (April 14) Nigerian troops had slaughtered 300 civilians in Abak Division, Annang. He also maintained that he had himself seen the markings on the plane 'RAF'.

There is no doubt that this war in Biafra has the overwhelming support of the people. There is no conscription, there is no war budget. When recruits are needed there is a recruiting campaign and it takes the police and military all their time to control the crowds of young men eager to enlist. There are many stories told of people trying to enlist. One young man was told by the Recruiting Officer 'But you are very young, have you asked your father's permission?' 'Don't be stupid,' came the prompt reply, 'do I have to ask my father's permission to defend my fatherland?'

Money for the war effort is raised in a similar manner. Just before we left, the women of Port Harcourt had raised £10,000 and

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were discussing how to raise a further £10,000. Money is given as willingly as life itself in Biafra today.

We were travelling back from Aba to Port Harcourt when the news of Tanzania's recognition came through and in spite of the curfew and the blackout the people were dancing and singing on the streets and the one word we heard above all others was 'Biafra'.

We had a long interview with Dr. Azikiwe who told us a little of his visit to President Nyerere. Dr. Azikiwe was very confident that it was only a matter of time before other African states would recognise Biafra.

The highlight of our tour was a personal interview with the Head of State, Lt. Col. Ojukwu, who broke his week's retreat in order to see us before our return home. The atmosphere was informal and we asked our questions freely and were freely answered by this gentle, quiet-spoken man. He told us that the formation of the Britain-Biafra Association was to him a vindication of his innermost belief that in Britain there must be people who understand and sympathise with the justness of Biafra's cause. He went on to confirm the impression we had received that Biafra will never return to Nigeria. 'Unless, of course', he went on, 'there is no Biafran left alive. But as long as there is a single Biafran alive the question of reunification with Nigeria is gone, never to come back, we will never allow it'.

On the question of British policy, Ojukwu said, 'We find British policy, to say the least, bewildering'. But he felt that there was now in Britain a change taking place, and people were beginning to ask questions. 'It's a start', he said.

On the question of Tanzania's recognition of Biafra he said that 'it is the first time an African country has demonstrated its independence'. He went on to say that the effect of this would grow with time, and that as a result of this bold step by Tanzania the question of Biafra and Nigeria 'has ceased to be an internal problem of Nigeria'.

When asked about the effect of the blockade and the war itself on Biafra's economy, Ojukwu said: 'In modern terms one sees that since the blockade there has been no economy. That is in modern terms. But when you look in basic terms you will find that the blockade has not really had a very great effect in that Biafra's economic potential is essentially what is innate in Biafra, and this is still there'.

Asked whether he would consider anything like the agreement reached at Aburi in January 1967, Ojukwu replied. 'Not now, not

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now. There will be aspects of it on the economic side of course, yes, but not on the question of political sovereignty.'

Commenting on the war itself, he said: 'We are supremely confident that we have already gone over the hump, that right now we are, as it were, leading down to victory. Victory for us is a simple thing—prevent ourselves being annihilated, stop. Not to conquer anybody; and this is why I've always maintained Lagos can never win, because theirs must be total victory, conquest. Ours—every day we prevent ourselves being over-run and massacred, that day we chalk up as being a victorious day'.

We came away from Biafra confident that Biafra is here to stay, and that our main task is to put pressure on the British Government to cease its supply of arms to Nigeria as the greatest contribution we can make to bringing the slaughter to an end.

WORLD STRUGGLE AT NEW DELHI

Quaestor

THIS journal (June-July 1964) recorded proceedings at the first United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD-I), held in Geneva, and the stubborn resistance of the imperialist powers, ranging from Britain, West Germany and USA to Spain, Portugal and South Africa, to every proposal of the former colonies, backed by the Socialist States, to redress their heavy burden of inequality—the result of centuries of plunder, retarded economic development, forced concentration on raw material production and trade discrimination. Nevertheless, by large majorities—3 or 4 to 1—the anti-imperialist bloc forced through decisions to begin putting matters right.

Even before UNCTAD-II assembled at New Delhi (February 1—March 29), materials compiled by its Secretariat had revealed that, so far as the imperialist powers were concerned, as little as possible had been done. There had been no new agreements to maintain prices of developing countries' export commodities, such as minerals, coffee, sugar, rubber, fruit, etc. Heavy tariffs against them, rising shipping costs, continued. Their share of world trade, 31 per cent in 1950, had slipped to 19 per cent by 1966. Above all, trade terms for them were worsening: world prices of their primary

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products fell, while those of manufactures they needed for progress rose. From 1961 to 1966 their net trade losses were as a result $13,388 m.—over 38 per cent of all the capital, loans and grants they received from abroad for development. Moreover, debt repayments, interest and insurance had grown from $2,200 m. in 1963 to $3,100 m. in 1965—creating the menace that (the Secretariat wrote) '*net* lending (at present rate) would fall to nearly zero by 1975, and turn negative thereafter'.

Many other eloquent facts abound in the Secretariat's reports, among them effective, if not intended, tributes to the contrast in behaviour between the capitalist and socialist powers. Exports of developing countries fell from 25 per cent of world exports to the capitalist countries, in 1960, to about 20 per cent by 1966: their exports in the same years rose from 7.4 per cent of total imports of the Socialist countries to 10 per cent—though of course this could not make up for the other loss. Again, average interest rates for credits were about 3.6 per cent in the capitalist countries, and had to be paid in 'hard' currencies: in the Socialist countries they were 2.5-3 per cent, repayable either in their traditional exports or in their own currencies.

These and similar facts came out in full force at New Delhi, all the more because 72 out of the 122 nations represented had had a preliminary meeting of developing countries at Algiers (October 10-25, 1967), and had formulated their demands for meeting the worsening situation: essentially that the 1964 decisions be fulfilled.

They demanded an end to unfair terms of trade, artificially maintained by the world monopolies. 'The poor countries are contributing to the wealth of the industrialised countries . . . like a blood transfusion in reverse' (Pinto, *Brazil*).

They wanted immediate price and output agreements for their goods coming on the world market. Fourteen countries producing rubber had lost over $4,000 m. between 1960 and 1968, owing to the price falling from 35 US cents per lb. to under 15 cents (Yeo Beng Poh, *Malaysia*). Thousands of tons of first-class bananas had had to be dumped into rivers for similar reasons (Cobo, *Ecuador*). 'The speed with which a wheat agreement was concluded, seen against the background of failure in reaching a cocoa agreement, leads my delegation to suspect that the interests of the third world received third place' (Bibeiro-Ayeh, *Ghana*).

They insisted that development aid should be free of strings tying it to particular purposes, and hindering progress to a balanced

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economy. 'The conditions of assistance have become prohibitive and even degrading' (Di Lutete, *Congo-Kinshasa*). Food aid, if given, should serve 'to stimulate, not inhibit, production' (Santa Cruz, *Chile*). International measures were needed to cope with the problem of 'tied aid' (Alikhani, *Iran*).

For the same reason, they asked that preferences for manufactured and semi-manufactured goods coming from developing countries be granted, which would stimulate industrial development. 'Aid which does not help us to do without aid in the long run is harmful' (Maalim, *Tanzania*). Efforts to produce industrial goods were useless if they were denied access to the markets of the industrialised countries (Baker, *Singapore*).

The response of the imperialist countries was, in scarcely veiled terms, the same as that of Richard II to the revolted peasants of 1381: 'Villeins you were, villeins you shall remain'. Schiller (*West Germany*) gave their answer early on. There must be 'adequate economic and financial policy' in return for aid: 'sound development policies', Shiina (*Japan*) said—which, being interpreted, meant that the imperialists would go on dictating terms. 'Socialist' Crosland (*Britain*) put it more delicately: taxpayers must be convinced that aid was 'making an effective contribution to development'. There can be no price-fixing for commodities 'against strong market trends', said Schiller—i.e. the great commercial monopolies must retain their free hand to manipulate prices. Developing countries should 'increasingly' accept private capital investments: a sentiment immediately echoed by Rostow (*USA*) and Jolles (*Switzerland*). Sharez (*Israel*) put the case with the brutal frankness appropriate to an aggressor government. Investment should not necessarily be for buildings and machinery: it could be for promoting trade among developing countries, research on food production, even family planning. Thus it could bring about 'a division of labour' among neighbouring countries—or, in plainer language, it could ensure that the Arab countries could stay as an agricultural hinterland, providing products and unskilled labour for the industry of Israel's pocket imperialism. The American Woods (*President of the World Bank*) spelt this out: aid should be used to develop technologies in the ex-colonies 'appropriate to their own circumstances', rather than trying to transfer 'the methods of the high-income countries': they should show 'greater modesty and realism in their aspirations'. These are but a few gems.

The Socialist countries supported all the main demands of the

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developing countries—because, as Patolichev (*USSR*) said: 'We know from our own experience how difficult is the transition from backwardness to advancement'. Many examples were given of how aid, in their case, was serving to build up balanced independent economies in the former colonies, without strings. Moreover, when deadlock came on March 12, and Prebitsch, the UNCTAD Secretary-General, warned that 'the Conference is on the verge of failure', it was the Socialist countries represented by the USSR who went into battle in the 'high-level consultations' behind the scenes, to secure compromise decisions which would provide a framework for further struggle in the years ahead. It was not by chance that Dinesh Singh, Indian Trade Minister and President of the Conference, said: 'The Socialist countries have fulfilled our expectations'.

There were energetic and justifiable final expressions of disappointment by the developing countries; but something was gained. For the first time, UNCTAD-II declared the obligation of shipping companies to consult with them about their freight charges, etc., and of States bordering on landlocked ex-colonies to do the same about transit terms. It recognised the right of developing countries to establish their own mercantile marine, and the duty of more advanced countries to help them. It laid down a programme and calendar of measures aiming at a series of specified commodity agreements, and established a special committee on preferences for the 'third world's' goods, to report by the end of 1969. By a series of votes, it declared that the terms for financial aid are generally 'too hard', and should not have strings (63-0, 7 abstentions): that the developing countries should be able to draw on the (US-dominated) International Monetary Fund, if there is an 'adverse movement' in prices of their export goods (67-0, 8 abstentions).

Need it be underlined that the same hard-line imperialists who fought all the way at UNCTAD-I were in the opposing or abstaining minorities at UNCTAD-II? And that when the British press wrote that the Conference was 'a tragic failure' (*The Times*, March 27) and had a 'disastrous outcome' (*The Observer*, March 31), this was only an echo of the imperialists' determination to try and sweep the New Delhi decisions under the carpet? There is still a hard fight ahead, in other words—but who could think otherwise? And the developing countries not only have Conference decisions to use among the working people of the imperialist countries—for they can be used. They (and the working people of those countries) have had a still more vivid lesson of who are their enemies, and who are their friends.

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JAMES CONNOLLY AND THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT

Joseph Deighan

JAMES CONNOLLY,* the centenary of whose birth we celebrate this month, no more belongs exclusively to the Irish than does Lenin to the Russians. He was a product of the internationalist and revolutionary trend of British socialism. There has been a great neglect of the work of this man who was a pioneer and teacher in the British labour movement. The reason for this neglect may lie in the weakness in general of the British labour movement's theoretical approach to national liberation struggles and the relationship of these to the battles on the home front.

The partitioning of Ireland took the 'Irish Question' temporarily out of British politics. One effect of this was that the literature of the working class and republican writers in Ireland, including the writings of Connolly, were not readily available to a whole generation of British workers. To them it appeared that Connolly's teachings were not their immediate concern. As a result there has been no adequate replacement of men like McManus, McLean, Gallacher, Bell, T. A. Jackson and many others who, influenced themselves by Connolly, interpreted his relevance to the British workers in their struggle for emancipation.

Connolly's political life coincided with the epoch of the Second International. He was self-educated. Until he joined the Socialist League in Scotland in 1889 at the age of twenty-one most of his reading had been of Irish history. He studied Marx and attended SDF lectures in Edinburgh. He advanced rapidly to local leadership. At this period he became acquainted with the leaders of the British labour movement, Eleanor Marx, Aveling, Hyndman, Tillett, Quelch among others. During his all too short career he spent six years in Scotland, eight years in the USA with lecture tours and propaganda campaigns in England, the best remembered being his campaign tour with Jim Larkin during the 1913 lock-out. In his early days he was influenced by John Leslie's pamphlet *The Present Position of the Irish Question* and he came to understand more clearly than his contemporaries the need for solidarity between the British working class and the national liberation movement. Illustrating this in his

* Born June 5, 1868, died May 12, 1916.

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Labour in Irish History Connolly wrote: 'One of the first and most bitter fruits of the Home Rule-Liberal alliance was the use of the Irish votes against the candidates of the Socialist and Labour parties. Despite the energetic protests of such men as Michael Davitt, the solid phalanx of the Irish voters was hurled against the men who had fought and endured suffering, ostracism and abuse for Ireland at a time when the Liberal government was packing Irish jails with unconvicted Irish men and women. . . . Obviously a union of Irish patriotism and socialist activity if furthered and endorsed by Irish organisations in Britain could not be long kept out of Ireland. Hence their frantic and illogical endeavour to twist and distort the significance of Irish history, and to put the question of property, its ownership and development, out of order in all discussions on Irish nationality. Commenting on this same issue, the Home Rule-Liberal alliance, nine years later Lenin said: 'The policy of Marx and Engels on the Irish question serves as a splendid example, which is of immense practical importance to this day, of the attitude the proletariat of the oppressing nations should adopt towards national movements. It should serve as a warning against that servile haste with which the philistines of all countries, colours and languages hurry to declare as "utopian" the idea of changing the frontiers of states that have been established by the violence and privileges of the landlords and bourgeoisie of one nation. Should the Irish and British proletariat not accept Marx's policy and make the secession of Ireland their slogan, that would be the worst of opportunism, neglect of their duties as democrats and socialists, and yielding to British reaction and the British bourgeoisie.'

From his Edinburgh days until his death at the hands of the British Government in 1916 Connolly consistently opposed the trend of revisionism in the Second International. The history of his opposition to the right-wing opportunists in the British labour movement has never been properly utilised by British socialists. His polemics with the Fabians, Hyndman, Glasier and Hardie raise questions that are still with us today. These problems arise from the two main trends in the working-class movement, between revolutionary socialism and opportunist 'socialism'. Unity with the opportunists means unity with the national bourgeoisie which exploits other nations as well as its own working class.

Connolly never fully worked out the reason for this division, although in practice he anticipated Lenin who uncovered the

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economic basis of it. The temporary privileged conditions of a section of the working class and its leadership sharing in the super-profits of imperialist exploitation, allying themselves with the ruling class and carrying out colonial policies of imperialism, whether they are in office or out, is the rôle of right-wing social democracy. It has seriously hindered the British working class from taking effective solidarity action with the national liberation struggles. As a result the struggle for socialism at home is weak. Socialist struggle can only be internationalist. The 1913 lock-out and the 1916 Rising proved the correctness of this thesis of Lenin.

The wave of political and industrial unrest which swept Britain and Ireland in the years before the first world war reached its crest in the great Dublin lock-out in 1913. The whole of the labour and trade union movement was aroused by the heroic stand of the Dublin workers against the ferocious onslaught of the employers to destroy the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, built up by Larkin and Connolly. Sympathetic strikes in Liverpool, Birmingham, South Wales and Yorkshire; mass solidarity meetings in many towns and cities; vigilance committees all over England to black tainted goods—such was the response to Connolly's call in his 'Manifesto to the British Working Class'. But class solidarity without political clarity was no match for the right-wing leadership of the TUC.

The 1913 lock-out was much more than an industrial dispute. It raised the issue for the British workers of Irish independence and the right of Irish workers to initiate their own struggle against capitalism and British imperialism. It also raised the problem of how the stranglehold, by which the Labour opportunists held the mass movement in check, was to be broken. The killing of the solidarity movement by the TUC leaders J. H. Thomas, Arthur Henderson and Havelock Wilson was an essential part in the preparation then being made by the government for the imperialist world war.

Connolly's unique understanding of the unity of the struggle for national independence and socialism reached its highest level in the last year of his life. When the 1914 war was declared he draped his defiant banner across the portico of Liberty Hall: 'We serve neither King nor Kaiser, but Ireland.' The Citizen Army had arisen from the 1913 struggle. To the horror of the British Labour opportunists he threw this workers' army into battle in alliance with the 'rebel Sinn Feiners' attempting, in Radek's term, a 'putsch' against the British. Many were the condemnations and patronising sorrowful

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headshakings in the British Labour press. Connolly the Marxist had gone 'nationalist', was their astonished verdict. A wiser judge was Lenin: 'If on the one hand, we were to declare and repeat in a thousand keys that we are opposed to all national oppression and, on the other hand, we were to describe as a "putsch" the heroic revolt of the most noble and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against its oppressors, we should be sinking to the same stupid level as the Kautskyites. The misfortune of the Irish is that they have risen prematurely when the European revolt of the proletariat has not yet matured'.

Connolly has much to say that is germane to the rapidly changing political situation in Britain today. He should be studied against the background of British working-class struggle, as well as that of the Irish. He was the embodiment of all that was best in revolutionary socialism in Britain. Today the organisations that stand for that trend have still to contend with the issues that Connolly faced. Right-wing opportunism still dominates the labour movement. Virulent attacks on the workers' living standards is its solution to the economic crisis arising out of imperialist policies. It sought to export the class struggle by tolerating colonial exploitation. But this betrayal of socialist solidarity has brought its logical result —race and colour questions on their home ground. The Irish question is still unsettled. In Scotland and Wales nationalists are calling into question the term 'British'. Youth is disturbed and militant. Workers in the revolutionary movement will need the knowledge and inspiration that the teaching and example of their best forerunners can give them. Of such was James Connolly.

DANGER-SIGNAL IN WEST GERMANY

D. N. Pritt

THE successes of the National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) in the State Elections in Baden-Würtemberg at the end of April have rightly enough alarmed public opinion outside West Germany, and indeed in that country as well, where for example Chancellor Kiesinger, who had previously, along with other ministers, been cautiously but unmistakably friendly to the Party and had

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rejected all demands to ban it, has now begun to call on the public not to support it.

The alarm is fully justified, and I do not accept the suggestion, designed to soothe public opinion, that the successes are largely due to a 'backlash' effect of the excellent student demonstrations in West Berlin and West Germany. The growth of the NPD, and its electoral successes, are not temporary but are due to the revived Nazi outlook of many elements in West Germany, which was already evident before the NPD was established. It must not be thought of as a new and unexpected resurgence of Nazism but as an acute manifestation of the general neo-Nazi situation. The government machinery of West Germany is, and has long been, heavily staffed by Nazis with bad records; the country is dominated by the same unchangeable ruling class that installed and maintained Hitler in power; and its main present policies are in essence Nazi. These are, firstly, to recover all the territories held by Nazi Germany at the end of 1937, and to build up great military strength to achieve that object by force, and secondly, to destroy the last vestiges of democracy in the country by amending the Constitution to establish a dictatorship on the exact pattern of Hitler's 'Enabling Laws' of 1933.

There need be no mistake, of course, as to the NPD being Nazi in outlook and policy. This can be amply established from its own statements; space prevents me from giving more than one of the many proofs available: confronted with the problem of stating its attitude to Nazism in the days of its power without either alarming moderate opinion or disappointing its own supporters, it gave in its 'Dictionary of political terms' the following description of the foul régime which brought endless misery to the world, and deliberately murdered millions of innocent people:

> German National-Socialism—1920-1945—was an attempt to bring into harmony the four fundamental elements of human life, namely, the biological element of preserving the human race, the economic element of providing for it, the political element of regulating communal life, and the religious element of interpreting the meaning of life. Paramount over this was an attempt to effect a synthesis of national awareness and of social justice achieved in practice.

The NPD must be regarded as a real menace; but the whole West German government and policy are an equally real and larger menace, of which the NPD is just one manifestation.

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN IRELAND

Betty Sinclair

ON September 14, 1967, the following letter was addressed to the Minister of Labour in the Irish Republic by Mr. Ruardhi Roberts, General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (which represents 363,000 trade unionists in the Republic, 56 per cent of the labour force):

> Dear Mr. Hillery,
>
> My Executive Council has given consideration to the reports of the Working Party on Industrial Relations and Trade Union Law. . . . It is the view of my Executive Council that the viewpoint of Congress has not been accepted by the Department . . . in respect of matters of great importance to members of affiliated unions on which agreement has not been found possible, further discussions would serve no useful purpose. . . .
>
> We, therefore, are withdrawing from these talks with your Department and wish to make it clear that we cannot accept any responsibility . . . in the proposed new legislation, and we reserve our position in respect of any legislation . . . you propose to issue.

This letter was the culmination of talks between the Government, the Federated Union of Employers and Congress following the receipt of a letter from the Minister of Industry and Commerce (May 17, 1966) wherein he expressed his grave concern about 'the many strikes which have recently occurred or are now in progress' and stating, 'I am sure that the responsible trade union and employer leaders wish to have industrial peace'.

For many years the Irish Government has sought a pattern of industrial relations that would provide for 'a cooling-off period' for strikes, outlaw 'unofficial' strikes, end the legal protection of strike pickets and bring in 'group negotiating licences' which would take away the power of individual unions. It was hoped that 'a voluntary agreement' would be arrived at. Spokesmen for the Government and employers did not hesitate to use 'the patriot game' and, if this did not bring the desired response, dire threats were made that if the unions did not 'put their house in order', the Government would do it for them.

The 1966 (July) Annual Meeting of Congress did not look with favour on the report of the Working Party. A Special Meeting of Congress (Dublin, December 1966) ended in near-chaos as delegate after delegate rejected the further report of the Working Party and

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refused to accept assurances of Congress officials and the recommendations of a very divided Executive Council—some of whom were actually members of the Working Party!

The 1967 (May) Annual Meeting of Congress was not impressed with warnings of 'what the Government would do' if Congress and the unions refused to take 'a responsible attitude' to the whole matter of industrial relations. Congress decided not to have any truck with 'negotiating licences', nor accept laws against 'unofficial strikes' and, remembering the good old trade union rule expounded by Connolly and Larkin, 'an injury to one is an injury to all', belaboured those who wanted trade unionists to 'pass the picket'.

Mr. Roberts's letter cleared the air. Congress, and its affiliated unions, will not be part of any 'voluntarily agreed' laws which would curb the unions. The first Object of Congress: 6 (a). 'To uphold the democratic character and structure of the trade union movement, to maintain the right of Freedom of Association and the right of workers to organise and negotiate, and all such rights as are necessary to the performance of trade union functions and, in particular, the right to strike' has been upheld.

In this situation it is interesting to note the appearance of a book by George F. Daly, *Industrial Relations: With Particular Reference to Ireland**. Described by the author as an attempt to deal 'briefly' (325 pages!) with the subject, this survey appears to have the backing of the Establishment, secular and clerical, and comes as an effort to counter the rising resentment of trade unionists of government interference in their affairs. Kind words there are, in plenty, for employers who 'risk the loss of their savings' (page 187). The writer is most condemnatory of the trade union movement which, he asserts, has 'a somewhat tarnished image among the public'. The usual calls are made to the workers and trade unions for 'responsibility', 'self-discipline', and for a joint permanent body of Congress and the FUE to 'at least attempt to draft an industrial code' (page 181).

The whole trade union movement in the Republic is fighting 'the battle of the Shannon' for trade union rights on behalf of over 1,000 workers against the American-owned electronics factory of E.I. Ltd. at the Shannon Industrial Estate and where the workers are shouting such slogans as: 'L.B.J. is Here', and where trade union officials are saying: 'The mighty dollar won't buy Irish workers. Is that the way American democracy works?'

* *Mercier*, 344 pp., 63s.

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BOOKS

Frank Cousins: A Study
Margaret Stewart
Hutchinson, 210 pp., 35s.

THIS BOOK COVERS A DECADE of Frank Cousins' work in the Labour movement. It begins when he was elected as General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union in the spring of 1956 (the result was Cousins 503,560—Healy 77,916), and terminates at the 1967 Trades Union Congress when the majority supported resolutions against wage restraint and Government interference with wages negotiations—an important trade union principle on which Cousins and his union had campaigned for a number of years.

The author who spent many weeks at trade union and Labour conferences (and many evenings behind the scenes in the hotel lounges at Brighton and Blackpool) is certainly well qualified to write such a book. Yet it is interesting to find that she like others reaches the mistaken conclusion that 'Cousins creates the impression of a gigantic jigsaw puzzle and not all the pieces can be fitted in to make up the complete picture'.

The reason why men against the Establishment (and Cousins is certainly against the Establishment) are labelled paradoxical and enigmatic is because the Establishment want it that way. The British trade union movement has always been dominated by, and the machine used by, the right wing. Many trade union leaders who disagreed with Trades Union Congress policy in the past, such as Arthur Horner of the Miners, Bryn Roberts of the Public Employees, Jim Figgins of the NUR, to mention only a few, have also had the tag of a 'screw loose somewhere' pinned on them. Yet like Cousins they were all straightforward frank-speaking genuine trade union leaders.

One of the interesting questions posed in the book is, why was Cousins able in only a few months of General Secretaryship to persuade the T & GWU to veer to the left in policy after many years of right-wing domination of the union, first by Bevin then Deakin? The book suggests the reason may be because the General Secretary of the T & GWU is the only elected office, all other officers (approximately 600) are appointed. This together with the fact that the General Secretary represents a continuity in what is largely a shifting 'population' (other officers and executive and delegate members) gives the General Secretary a highly influential role. This is certainly true but this happens not only in the T & GWU. The same can be said in recent years when top officials have been replaced in the National Union of Railwaymen, the Foundry Workers, the Electrical Trades Union, and other unions. What needs to be made sharp and clear is that Cousins exerted his influence to pull the T & GWU to the left when it was not popular, while officials in other unions were mounting the right-wing bandwagon and influencing policy in the opposite direction. Many times because of his convictions Cousins found himself in a small minority in the General Council of the TUC. Yet he held his convictions, argued his case and won many allies in the process. The reward for the work done came with the victories at the 1967 TUC against wage restraint and at the Labour Party Conference on nuclear disarmament. The story of the debates at the TUC and Labour Party Conferences is fully described in the book with some very useful quotations.

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For a brief period of 20 months, October 1964 to July 1966, Cousins was lured from the General Secretaryship of the T & GWU to the corridors of power at Westminster. He became Member of Parliament for Nuneaton, Minister for Technology and a member of the Wilson Labour Cabinet. Again his left-wing views conflicted with those of his Cabinet colleagues, principally on prices and incomes policy and nuclear disarmament. The conflict increasingly grew and finally Cousins resigned and returned to his former position in the union. His fight against Labour Cabinet policy has been entirely vindicated by every event since.

The book, important to anyone wishing to study the Labour movement during this period, never reads dry for the reader, and takes him from point to point in an easy ride. One can disagree with the author on some of her main conclusions on 'Man and Motive' but this in no way detracts from the value of the book.

DAVE BOWMAN

Ho Chi Minh

Jean Lacouture, translated by Peter Wiles

Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 256 pp., 35s.

PUBLISHED OVER A YEAR AGO in France, and only now made available to us in translation, Jean Lacouture's book on Ho Chi Minh is one which *must* be read by all who wish to understand the situation in Vietnam. As a biography it is among the better which I have read, and among the more understanding, but it is perhaps even more important as a history of the struggle of the Vietnamese people for their emancipation, from its inception to the present time of its approaching glorious consummation.

It shows Ho as the very personification of that long-drawn struggle, one who has suffered bitterly its many vicissitudes, but without being in any way its 'supreme controller', whose omniscience and personality have been enough to lead his people to victory. Self-effacement, even at moments of triumph, and passionate desire to persuade people by argument, rather than to compel them, are persistent features in the conduct of a man of whom the author wrote, in an introductory paragraph which has unfortunately not been reproduced in the translation: 'Of all men living today, M. Ho is perhaps the one who will best have shown what can be achieved by sheer will, backed by implacable political technique and rooted in popular aspiration.'

Revolutionaries all over the world can learn much from this book, but there are two weaknesses in the book, both of which would appear to be due to the author's surprising dependence for his information on our discredited 'expert', P. J. Honey. The first is gross misunderstanding and mis-statement of events which have taken place, and of the situation obtaining in Vietnam north of the 17th parallel. The other is a failure to note that Ho's attitude in relation to Sino-Soviet antagonism is, it seems to me, that US aggression against Vietnam has placed that country in an exceptionally favourable position for bringing about the re-establishment of the unity of the world Communist movement.

COMMANDER EDGAR P. YOUNG, RN Retired

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Editor: Autobiography 1931-1945
Kingsley Martin
Hutchinson, 340 pp., 42s.

IN THE BOUTS OF NOSTALGIA which at present seem to dominate the British literary and television scene there is at the moment a special vogue for all kinds of imaginary reconstructions and mythology about a period called 'the thirties'. It is therefore useful that Kingsley Martin, who can speak with authentic authority as having been the undisputed centre of a social milieu during that period, has embalmed within the covers of a book all the well-intentioned illusions and confusions of what unkind critics used to call 'the middle-muddle left' and what he describes with characteristic frankness as the 'eggheads' who always 'found the greatest difficulty in making up their minds' and shared his special capacity for 'seeing seven sides to every question'.

The *New Statesman*, as we used to know it under the editorship of the world-weary cynic Clifford Sharp, was a right-wing Fabian organ, only made useful by its research supplements, and enlivened from its normal dullness by the sparkling eruptions of Shaw—most notably his 'Common Sense About the War' which punctured the jingo mania in the autumn of 1914. When the hitherto little known Kingsley Martin took over in 1930, he revealed himself rapidly as an editor of genius, who successfully cannibalised the other organs in the same field, the *Nation*, the *Athenaeum* and *Week End Review*, multiplied circulation six-fold, within four years had made the journal a profit-making concern, whereas previous backers had had to fork out £100,000 to pay for deficits, and established his organ as the indispensable monopoly organ gathering around itself, even if in sharp dispute, all the highly disparate 157 varieties of the intellectual and literary left.

The period in question, from 1931 to 1945, was a period of great mass struggles. The battles of the unemployed and the Hunger Marches, with Hannington and the Communists in the leadership, while the right-wing Labour and trade union leadership tried to ban them (Hannington's *Never On Our Knees* gives the true record). The battles against Mosley and his stormtroopers, backed by the police, when the workers, led by the Communist Party, stopped fascism from dominating the streets of London as it had done the streets of Berlin and Rome, while the right-wing Labour and trade union leaders told the workers to stay at home and leave the streets clear for Mosley. The battle for the Spanish Republic, when the inspiration of Harry Pollitt and the Communist Party initiated the formation of the British Battalion of the International Brigade. The battle against the Munich betrayal, when the voice of the Communist MP Gallacher was the sole voice in Parliament denouncing the betrayal at the time, while the Labour Party leaders had cried 'Godspeed' to Chamberlain and Churchill remained slumped and silent. The culminating battles of the second world war, when the Communists were the first to expose the Chamberlain-Daladier strategy of the phoney war, and, after the great alliance for victory had at last been achieved, the giant demonstrations organised by the Communist Party in Trafalgar Square for the Second Front exceeding in scale any demonstrations that have been held since 1945.

Little echo of this popular record of mass struggle will be found in this book, which moves in a different world of coterie discussions, lunches and behind-the-scenes talks with influential big names in the corridors of

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power, endless speculations, endless memoranda—and at each decisive point, wobble. The intentions are admirable, sincere, earnest: concern over the advance of fascism; desire for stopping the advance of fascism; for collective security; for the alliance with the Soviet Union. But then always at the critical point comes the wobble. This is glaringly revealed even in the very inadequate account given of the history of the period and the fight against appeasement.

Hitler's military occupation of the Rhineland in 1936. Characteristically the Anglo-French passive acceptance of this appears (so also in all the conventional accounts) as if it were the first milestone in the 'appeasement', that is, rearmament of Hitler—ignoring the host of previous actions from the first accession of Hitler to power, when the British Prime Minister MacDonald on behalf of the National Government immediately proposed the doubling of the German army and halving of the French army, to the key decisive step of the British-German Naval Treaty of 1935 which officially and unilaterally tore up the restrictions on German rearmament, and gave Germany 100 per cent equality in submarines. But even if we accept the test of the Rhineland in 1936 as the first test of the attitude to the 'appeasement' of Hitler, what was the attitude of the heroes of the *New Statesman*?

> 'Why, we asked ourselves, should we try to prevent Germany occupying German territory, knowing full well that if Hitler was forced to withdraw he would merely wait for another day when he was stronger'? (p. 169).

The attempt to make a stand to stop Hitler's aggression was bound to be in vain anyway.

> 'People seem to think that a tough line towards Hitler, when he invaded the Rhineland or attacked Czechoslovakia two years later, would have prevented the war. In fact, as we now know, if Hitler had been resolutely opposed in 1936 he would have withdrawn and waited for a better opportunity' (p. 24).

Or take the test of sanctions against Mussolini's war on Ethiopia. At the critical point the heroes put their trust in Sir Samuel Hoare and Sir John Simon:

> 'I was among the excited spectators at Geneva when Sir Samuel made this speech . . . Instead of Sir John Simon explaining why the Covenant could not be invoked, here was a plain-speaking Foreign Secretary boldly declaring that Britain favoured collective security. I rang up my paper and reported that Britain after all intended business. I was not alone in believing that the British Government meant what it said' (p. 177).

Of course disillusionment followed after Moses Primrose had come home with his gross of green spectacles. 'It was a deception and confusion.'

And Munich? The heroes even anticipated *The Times* in advocating already on August 27, 1938, the amputation of Czechoslovakia for the benefit of Hitler:

> 'If Hitler agrees to accept a solution with Czechoslovakia, it may still be possible, if the Czechs make an imaginative offer of partnership to the Sudeten Germans, to reconcile them to the existing frontiers. But if Lord Runciman reports that this is impossible, the question of frontier revision, difficult though it is, should at once be tackled. The strategical value of the Bohemian frontier should not be made the occasion of a world war' (*New Statesman and Nation*, 27.8.38).

Wryly remarking that 'this was a mistake which I was never allowed to

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forget', he still attempts to defend it by citing the distinguished company in which he trod the Munich road, including the advice of Keynes ('bluff to the hilt, and if the bluff is called, back out'), Churchill's approval of the Runciman mission—of course no mention of Gallacher—and the argument which he still seems to consider true that 'world war was inevitable if we stuck to our pledge without a Soviet alliance, and it was my duty to say so'. He fails to take into account the information now available that the Soviet Union had prepared a full military stand by Czechoslovakia to resist Hitler, even if Britain and France refused to act, and had given this message to their Ambassador in Prague, but that Masaryk and Benes, owing to their Western connections, committed the fatal blunder of accepting the Anglo-French *diktat* for the partition of Czechoslovakia rather than save the independence of Czechoslovakia with Soviet aid—as still had to be done later, after much greater costs.

To follow this melancholy record through all its convolutions would take too long. The misconceptions on communist policy and Soviet policy follow commonplace lines.

It is more profitable to consider what lessons can be drawn for the Left today. A little more recognition of class forces and realities would have helped. Kingsley Martin boasts that he escaped 'falling into the easy fallacies of orthodox Marxism'. Certainly it is evident he knew nothing of it save from the usual second-hand hostile sources, since he actually believes that Marxism teaches that man is 'a purely economic animal' (p. 200 and *passim*), whereas he triumphantly proclaims in his final review that men go to war 'for many reasons—dynastic, national, economic or religious' and 'men are aggressive animals'. Truly the enthronement of banality and virgin ignorance of Marxism.

Nevertheless, any necessary criticism should not obscure the fact that there is an abundance of most readable and often illuminating information and sidelights in this book, conversations with personages, and all kinds of memoranda, including a most damning reproduction of innumerable memoranda by Keynes, illustrating his grasshopper mind. There is a fascinating interview with Trotsky in Mexico in 1937, with whom he raised the question in relation to the public trials in Moscow: 'Why did none of the accused men imitate Dimitrov?' in view of the presence of the world press, at which Trotsky became 'very animated' and declared that these correspondents were all 'paid prostitutes of Moscow':

> 'It was here that I began to demur. I had certainly been influenced by some of these "prostitutes". "The arch-villain among the press men", Trotsky shouted, "was Walter Duranty" of the *New York Times*. How much did I think Pritt had been paid to write his account of things? I explained that I knew Pritt well, that he might have been deceived, might even be accused of credulity, but that he was not open to bribes.
>
> 'Trotsky and I had a regular wrangle on this point, and I am afraid I failed to convince him. To see him get up and shout abuse at Mr. Pritt was most revealing. He seemed to believe that anyone who had a word to say for Stalin or who hesitated to denounce the whole trial as a frame-up must be in the pay of Moscow.'

There is no doubt that, whatever the differences on policies of the period, this book is a rich historical treasure-trove.

R.P.D.

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(From 'Rationalisation and British Industry', by Hugo Rathbone, *Labour Monthly*, June 1928.)

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